

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Wednesday, 23 June 2021 15:00 GMT +03:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Catalysing Women's Agri-preneurship and Food Trade in Africa
CONVENED BY	Sabdiyo Dido - Head of Gender and Inclusiveness (AGRA) Betty Otieno - Gender Coordinator (AGRA)
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/21923/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	No borders

The outcomes from a Food Systems Summit Dialogue will be of use in developing the pathway to sustainable food systems within the locality in which they take place. They will be a valuable contribution to the national pathways and also of interest to the different workstreams preparing for the Summit: the Action Tracks, Scientific Groups and Champions as well as for other Dialogues.

1. PARTICIPATION

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0	0-18	30	19-30	106	31-50	68	51-65	6	66-80		80+
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PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

58	Male	151	Female	1	Prefer not to say or Other
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NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

104	Agriculture/crops	17	Education		Health care
1	Fish and aquaculture	3	Communication		Nutrition
2	Livestock	12	Food processing	4	National or local government
	Agro-forestry	1	Food retail, markets	1	Utilities
	Environment and ecology		Food industry		Industrial
4	Trade and commerce	10	Financial Services	51	Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

52	Small/medium enterprise/artisan	1	Workers and trade union
6	Large national business		Member of Parliament
4	Multi-national corporation		Local authority
9	Small-scale farmer	6	Government and national institution
5	Medium-scale farmer	2	Regional economic community
	Large-scale farmer	7	United Nations
7	Local Non-Governmental Organization	3	International financial institution
54	International Non-Governmental Organization	20	Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance
	Indigenous People	16	Consumer group
	Science and academia	18	Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

HOW DID YOU ORGANIZE THE DIALOGUE SO THAT THE PRINCIPLES WERE INCORPORATED, REINFORCED AND ENHANCED?

Acting with Urgency: The dialogue was organised with an effort to bringing together women agri-food entrepreneurs, governments, financing partners, regional and national agri-food buyers, and development partners for a better understanding of constraints, opportunities and action areas for empowering women on agri-preneurship and food trade within the Continent. The dialogue was co-organised with key stakeholders that have a special interest on the inclusion of women in sustainable food systems. To ensure all participants' voices were heard, the dialogue had a total of 10 breakout sessions to give all participants a chance to give their views. Participants were given the opportunity to choose their breakout theme during registration, allowing participants to contribute to a theme of their interest. Being respectful: Every breakout session was facilitated by a key stakeholder with the technical expertise in that particular subject. In preparation to the dialogue, the facilitators and their session rapporteurs were prepared in advance to ensure that they would allow for participation of the group participants. Recognizing complexity and embracing multi-stakeholder inclusivity: The dialogue was organised and co-hosted with a diversity of stakeholders from within women agri-entrepreneurs, governments, financing partners, regional and national agri-food buyers, and development partners. The event was hosted at continental level capturing diverse cultural background with a specific focus on catalysing women's agri-entrepreneurship and food trade in Africa. The dialogue was building on Country consultations and had country speakers representing the different African regions and cultures that is (West Africa, East Africa and Southern Africa). Complimenting the work of others and building trust: The planning of the event entailed mapping out of different stakeholders recognizing their strengths and expertise on the theme of the dialogue. The organizers then reached out to the mapped stakeholders.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

The attendance attracted participants from over 30 countries including speakers who were from across Africa and beyond. The breakout session groups had an average of 20 participants per group, which allowed for an interactive session by giving each participant a chance to contribute to the discussions. Facilitators were given a chance to choose a topic based on their technical experience in order to have a more productive sessions by asking the relevant questions and also getting the right key points and messages from the discussions.

DO YOU HAVE ADVICE FOR OTHER DIALOGUE CONVENORS ABOUT APPRECIATING THE PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT?

We advise other dialogue conveners that it is very important to follow these principles to have a very productive and rich dialogue that not only bring diverse ideas from various levels of stakeholders but ideas that are also dependable. We also recognise that the principles of engagement should not only apply to UNFSS dialogue but to every other convenings meant to foster sustainable food systems development.

3. METHOD

The outcomes of a Dialogue are influenced by the method that is used.

DID YOU USE THE SAME METHOD AS RECOMMENDED BY THE CONVENORS REFERENCE MANUAL?

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Yes

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No

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

Dialogue main theme: Catalysing women's agri-entrepreneurship and food trade in Africa to advance equitable livelihoods.

Dialogue specific themes:

Evolve a collective understanding of the issues, challenges, and opportunities prevalent in the 11 countries where the mini Dialogues have been held

Share on headlines, solutions that are emerging from country consultations through selected country memorandums

Bolster African women's voice in the UN food systems Dialogue and strengthening the continental platform for women in agri-food entrepreneurs

Inform and influence continental partners, policy and regulatory actors on the needs and aspirations of women in agri-food enterprises

Refine and or contribute to game-changing solutions on women in agri-food enterprises, for the United Nations Food Systems Summit

Breakout themes:

- Gender responsive business environment
- Business growth and formalization
- Women's business segment
- Business leadership
- Women's associations in agripreneurship
- Women's access to information and business networks
- Women's access to affordable and innovative finance and capital
- Women's access to mechanization and digital technologies
- Women's access to high-value markets
- Women's involvement in cross border and food trade

ACTION TRACKS

	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
	Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
	Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
✓	Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
	Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

	Finance		Policy
	Innovation		Data & Evidence
	Human rights		Governance
✓	Women & Youth Empowerment		Trade-offs
			Environment and Climate

MAIN FINDINGS

Our key findings are outlined below:

It was clear that in many African countries gender favourable policies have been put in place however they have not been operationalised, therefore there is need for operationalization of gender policies. The dialogue findings affirmed the need for addressing legal dualism by formulating policies that address cultural interference in policy implementation. Capacity limitation for women entrepreneurs emerged as the key constraint hindering their equal participation in food systems, therefore a recommendation was made to develop the capacity of women entrepreneurs in technical, business and soft skills.

Given the emerging digital economy amplified by COVID-19 pandemic coupled by Africa's wide digital gender gap, the need to promote interventions that increase women's access to digital technologies and strengthen digital literacy proved to be imperative. It was observed that the current extension and advisory services are not gender responsive hence the need to design and support gender responsive extension and advisory services to reach women agripreneurs more effectively. It was broadly agreed that the key factors that impede women agripreneurs' access to finance and capital are lack of collateral, high interest rates and poor collaboration between stakeholders, therefore developing gender responsive financial and business support services coupled with diverse financial schemes, interest free loans and grant to small enterprises, incentives to financial institutions to accept alternative forms of collateral. Finally, it was concluded that there is need to support innovation and research addressing gender and business success.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC

There was a call for a fundamental change in how 'value' is perceived by companies and at the broader society as present systems undervalue women's contributions, especially in the area of unpaid care work. It was agreed that developing gender responsive systems will require making fundamental changes to meeting women's needs. Rather than trying to make women fit into current systems or practices, new systems that are women friendly need to be devised to include alternative collateral systems, gender responsive procurement to ensure women can engage in value chains.

Participants attributed limited business growth among the majority of women owned agro-enterprises in Africa to poor access to finance, market information, technologies and women's limited technical and business capacities and knowledge. The absence of post-training support and follow-up also contribute to low business growth. They identified fostering a growth-oriented mindset among women entrepreneurs through training and mentoring as a potential solution.

It was observed that women entrepreneurs tend to be concentrated in specific value chain areas partly because most women go into agribusiness out of economic necessity to provide for their families as opposed to pursuing an opportunity. It is thus necessary to provide open-source business and market information and step by step business guidance through channels and format that are easily accessible and attractive to women.

It was underscored that the existence of well-established networks including VALUE4HER, AWAN-Afrika, Nourishing Africa among others, that provide platforms for women in agribusiness to raise their voices at local and continental level. Better connectivity has helped to strengthen women's networks but opportunities for improvement in this area still exist. Participants pointed out that women members of cooperatives and producer associations (estimated at 30%) tend to be older and noted that the poorest and least educated women tend not to join these groups or choose people to represent them who do not have their best interest at heart. It was emphasized that it is important for women not to just belong to collectives, but to take ownership of these groups to make their demands heard.

Most African women agripreneurs, particularly in rural areas, have limited access to information and business networks. It was noted that the switch to virtual communication, e-opportunities and on-line platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic has increased women's marginalization. It was voiced that improving women's access to information and business networks is critical for moving women agripreneurs away from production related activities to more profitable processing and value addition enterprises.

Participants broadly agreed that the key factors that impede women agripreneurs' access to finance and capital are lack of collateral, high interest rates and poor collaboration between stakeholders. They suggested developing diverse financial schemes for different agricultural products like different schemes for seasonal crops, annual, and perennial crops, providing interest free loans and grants to micro and small enterprises

Women agripreneurs' low use of digital technologies holds them back in several areas, notably, accessing digital financial services, markets and information and prevents them from taking full advantage of social media and digital agribusiness platforms such as VALUE4HER to grow their agri-enterprise. It was emphasized that publicizing information on agriculture related tools and equipment particularly through information channels used by women producers, explore innovative ways to improve women's digital education and use of digital technologies and spaces by, for example, organizing women agripreneurs into collectives headed by a tech-savvy leader.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

While lack of access to capital to purchase or use mechanized technologies was identified as the biggest challenge, others believed it was the general lack of awareness about tools and equipment and their costs, a lack of knowledge and skills on how to use tools and equipment and many women being intimidated by tools, technologies and equipment that are largely used by men that hinders women from using mechanization services.

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ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

ATTACHMENTS

- **AGRA's Independent Dialogue Report**
<https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/AGRA-dialogue-report.pdf>